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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography focuses on the effect of coming out on lesbian and gay teachers. It begins with an essay on teachers' coming out experiences and the consequences of coming out, examining the bifurcation of homosexual teachers' personal and public lives. Topics in the bibliography include the construction of teacher identity; coming out and closeting in schools and university (between gay authenticity and homophobia); the importance of coming out narratives for lesbian and gay teachers; and the realities of lesbian and gay teachers' lives. (SM)

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The Rhetoric of Coming Out and Its Effect on Lesbian and Gay Teachers: Gay Identity Politics in the Public Sphere and in Private Lives An Annotated Bibliography

ED 467 427

By Cynthia Jo Mahaffey

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Bowling Green State University

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The Rhetoric of Coming Out and Its Effect on Lesbian and Gay Teachers: Gay Identity Politics in the Public Sphere and in Private Lives

An Introduction

In a recent discussion on a lesbian and gay list serve to which I belong, comprised of many teachers and ministers, concerns were expressed about the continuing difficulties lesbian and gay youth experience in understanding and accepting their/our sexual orientation. (I will refer to lesbian and gay teachers throughout this piece as "we/our" to own my position as a lesbian teacher, and to avoid the fiction of many academic pieces that the author is disinterested, or wishes to make invisible her/his own sexual orientation). As is common in any group of lesbian and gay persons, list serve members began telling our own "coming out" stories—how we came to know the nature of our sexualities, how many of us struggled in isolation, and how few of us were aware of older adults to whom we could talk about these issues. As adults we were able to look back at our school days and identify teachers who were almost surely lesbian or gay and who were supportive of us in many indirect ways. List serve members told these as narratives—"Miss Smith, my English teacher, who encouraged my writing and spent hours after school listening to my teenaged angst," or "Mr. Jones, my government teacher, who refused to allow other students to make fun of my "gay ways," though he was the only teacher in school who stopped the remarks"—and to a person, offered reasons why these "probably, most definitely" lesbian and gay teachers could not make themselves known as lesbian or gay: "She would have been fired." "He would have been called a child molester, even though he never touched anyone." "The school district

where I went to school was SO conservative. She would have been in physical danger if anyone had known."

These coming-out narratives, with their strong subtexts of teachers who were invisible as lesbians and gays, point to several crucial issues for lesbian and gay teachers. Teachers who are lesbian and gay face many constraints and exigencies in their struggle to integrate these often competing identities. As authors in the following bibliography repeatedly show, lesbians and gays may suffer loss of employment, loss of support from their administrations, parental ire, and physical danger if they disclose their sexual orientation in the school environment (King, Woods and Harbeck, Harbeck, Khayatt, Kissen, and others). Historically, these constraints and consequences have been very real, though several authors—Harbeck, Tierney, and Juul—feel that these are less dangerous than in the past.

These consequences for self-disclosure, coupled with societal expectations and dictation of morality for teachers, have resulted in a long history of lesbian and gay educators "closeting" themselves—hiding their sexual orientation from school administrators, teaching colleagues, parents and students through a variety of strategies (Griffin, King, Magee, Harbeck, and Kissen). These closeting strategies in turn have deep emotional, physical and professional costs for lesbian and gay educators—teachers feel they must: strictly monitor their personal speech and appearance with colleagues and students, keep social distance from colleagues and rigid personal distance from students, and keep their personal lives, including significant others and life partners, hidden (Griffin, King, Magee, Woods and Harbeck, Harbeck, Juul, Kissen, Jennings, Krieger).

This bifurcation between personal and public lives is often exacerbated, for many lesbian and gay teachers, by the power of the coming-narrative in the gay communities of which these teachers are a part. The rhetoric of coming out, in gay culture and identity politics, is equated with personal integration and authenticity, and becomes a means of safety for greater numbers of lesbians and gays (Tierney). The line from a recent lesbian movie, Everything Relative, is a familiar rallying cry for gay identity and visibility: "None of us are free until we all are free."

When lesbian and gay teachers attempt to reconcile this highly valorized rhetoric with the complex problems we face in the heterosexist and homophobic context of school culture, we must make constant micro-decisions each day in each situation we face with regard to self-disclosure about our levels of personal and professional safety, about our rapport with students, about our pedagogy and about the desperate needs of lesbian and gay, as well as straight, students for healthy lesbian and gay adult models (Deiro, Griffin, King, Lamb, Magee, Skelton, Woods and Harbeck, Juul, Kissen, Jennings, Rensenbrink). The constant problem-posing and –solving involved often leads to a tremendous drain on the energies of lesbian and gay educators, energy which could be better focused on our teaching tasks and in support of lessening homophobia in the school setting.

Khayatt, Lamb, Magee, Skelton, Woods and Harbeck, Juul, Kissen, Jennings, Spraggs, and Mintz argue for coming out as a stance that will free lesbian and gay teachers from the energy-draining strategies of closeting. This "rhetoric of coming out for teachers" offers a variety of strategies for self-disclosure, recognizing the exigencies and problems the homophobic school culture presents. Teachers may choose to select certain colleagues and/or administrators to whom we reveal our sexual orientation, on a case-by-

case basis, a strategy known as being "implicitly out." Or teachers may choose not to edit their personal pronouns when speaking of partners, may become involved in education to lessen homophobia, may challenge students' and colleagues' homophobic remarks, the strategy of being "explicitly out" (Griffin, Kissen, Harbeck and Woods, Magee).

This last position, "explicitly out," offers teachers the most integration of their personal and professional lives, and most authenticity as teachers in the classroom. As out teachers, we are honest about our subject positions, which necessarily affect students (whether we are honest about them or not). Students, lesbian, gay and straight, may see models of healthy lesbian and gay adults. Students who are lesbian and gay will have easily identifiable support persons, if, as lesbian and gay teachers, we are open to this role. As out teachers, we are less susceptible to blackmail and rumor campaigns, and can confront and negotiate issues of conflict and difference openly in the classroom and school. As openly lesbian and gay teachers, we can confront the homophobic remarks and threats that make schools unsafe for all students.

As an increasingly "out" teacher of first-year composition in the university setting—I am currently out to many colleagues and to lesbian and gay students on campus—I recognize, as do the authors in this bibliography, that location, academic climate, and safety issues continue to problematize the position of being explicitly out, particularly in public and private secondary and elementary schools. I am not yet out to students in my classroom, and try to think about why I am not. I, too, negotiate daily, the ways in which I come out and my motivations for doing so. Professionally, it is important to me that, first and foremost, students view me as a competent and intelligent

teacher of writing. Additionally, I see daily the crucial role I play, as all teachers do, in making classrooms safe for all students—lesbian, gay, and straight. I hear—and challenge—the homophobic remarks my students make to each other and to those with whom they are unfamiliar. Personally, I am the mother of a young son, and wonder if more public awareness of my sexual orientation will impact his safety (his happiness has not been impacted, thanks to many loving straight and homosexual friends, teachers, church members with whom we associate, and to his unconditional and supportive acceptance of me). He is present with me at many of the community functions we hold at the living/learning community in which I teach, which is part of the greater university. The publication of this essay and bibliography will impact all those different public and private intersections for me, a lesbian teacher, as those intersections impact countless other lesbian and gay teachers. As I seek to be increasingly authentic—and out—in my classrooms, to all my students, my goal, as it is the goal of many lesbian and gay teachers, is to bring the best teaching self I can offer to my students.

The Rhetoric of Coming Out and Its Effect on Lesbian and Gay Teachers: Gay Identity Politics in the Public Sphere and in Private Lives

The Construction of Teacher Identity

Cramer, Elizabeth P. "Strategies for Reducing Social Work Students' Homophobia." Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

In this scholarly and extensive collection of essays on issues surrounding the reduction of homophobia in various school settings, Cramer's piece is one of the only which included information concerning the effect on students of a teacher's coming out in the classroom, and one of the only openly identified as written from the subject position of the lesbian teacher. Cramer, a professor of social work, discusses a course in which she works to educate social work students about homosexuality and to decrease their homophobic attitudes. She indicates that she "disclosed [her] lesbian identity...during a unit on lesbian/gay issues," and "wait[s] until trust and rapport has been built with the students and after they know me as an instructor and for the person who I am" (291).

Cramer finds positive results in disclosing her sexual orientation to students,

> Including increasing the visibility of lesbians/gays on campus, connecting with gay/lesbian students, and dispelling heterosexuals' misconceptions about lesbians and gay men (293).

Further, she argues that disclosure lessens students' homophobia when they know the teacher and when s/he has established trust with the students.

Deiro, Judith. "Teacher Strategies for Nurturing Healthy Connections with Students." Journal for a Just and Caring Education 3:2 (1997): 192-202.

I include this article, even though it does not address the issues faced by lesbian and gay educators, because it offers a useful, and, I think, important alternative approach to the entangled relationships teachers often engender with students. As such, Deiro's approach may be a helpful strategy for lesbian and gay educators, who must balance issues of trust, distance, self-disclosure, professionality, and personal authenticity. Deiro discusses six strategies: "Creating one-to-one time, using appropriate self-disclosure, believing strongly in students' abilities, networking with family and friends, building a sense of community, and using rituals and traditions."

Griffin, Pat. "From Hiding Out to Coming Out: Empowering Lesbian and Gay Educators." Coming Out of the Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers, and Curricula. Ed. Karen M. Harbeck. New York: Harrington Park Press/Haworth, 1992. 167-196.

Noting that "fewer than ten studies focus specifically on the professional experiences of gay and lesbian educators" (168), Griffin, in 1987-1989, constructs a case study examining the professional behaviors tied to being lesbian or gay in thirteen educators. Griffin identifies strategies used by these teachers to safely negotiate their lesbian or gay identities in the public space of the classroom. These include being totally closeted (not revealing their sexual identity to anyone in their professional environment and keeping public and private lives strictly separate, "passing" (presenting in dress as "heterosexual," lying about partners, changing personal pronouns when speaking about partners, bringing opposite gender "dates" to school functions), "covering" (censoring speech about partners, silence about derogatory comments by students in class or about oneself, distancing from colleagues and students), "implicitly out" (telling truth without gay/lesbian labels, not changing pronouns when speaking about partners), and "explicitly out" (affirming gay/lesbian identity, supportive of gay/lesbian students, challenging of derogatory remarks by students) (177).

A significant component of Griffin's study is her inclusion of an "empowerment process" for the research participants, citing "participatory research as critical inquiry" philosophy from the work of Freire, Hall, Lather, and others:

> (a) It is essential to acknowledge and address power imbalances among different social groups, (b) research is political, (c) research should move beyond description to facilitate social change, (d) research should enlighten and empower the participants to develop a critical understanding of their situation and should provide the means for them to take collective action to gain greater control over their lives, and (e) this action should begin with dialogue and reflection among participants about their personal experiences. The purposes of a participatory research project are to create a process in which members of a disempowered social group (in this case gay and lesbian educators) can work together collectively to articulate their common experience and then act to change power inequities resulting from their social group membership (169).

Given the weight of anecdotal evidence on the victimization of lesbian and gay educators, this empowerment process, which gives teachers real agency, seems crucial, and, perhaps it should be noted, meshes with the gay community's politicized rhetoric/support of coming out. The process in this study had as its goals "positive feelings about self- and group-identity as gay and lesbian educators…a better understanding of themselves as lesbian and gay educators in a heterosexist society…. and to create an opportunity for gay and lesbian educators to take action to change their situation, to gain more control over their work lives" (183). The group actions involved included marching together, identified as lesbian and gay educators, in a local gay pride march, and starting an organization for gay, lesbian and bisexual educators in their area. Individual actions included coming out to selected colleagues, using accurate pronouns when sharing about

partners with colleagues, and challenging homophobic comments made by students (187).

Khayatt, Didi. "Sex and the Teacher: Should We Come Out in Class?" Harvard Educational Review 67:1 (1997):126-143.

The author uses her experience as a lesbian teacher to examine the issues of coming out to students. She examines the rhetoric of coming out for ways in which lesbian and gay teachers are expected to act as role models and support persons for gay students and to challenge homophobic comments in the classroom.

King, James R "Uncommon Caring: Male Primary Teachers as Constructed and Constrained." Caring in An Unjust World: Negotiating Borders and Barriers in Schools. Ed. Deborah Eaker-Rich and JaneVan Galen. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. 47-60.

Examining "culturally constructed factors such as caring, gendered behavior, and sexual orientations," King exposes public perceptions of male primary school teachers which "monitor…those male teachers who are not married, and who "act funny"" (47) and the educational rhetoric that both encourages men to be primary teachers and closely watches those who do. The author, a gay teacher, posits that because primary teaching "is viewed as a context of caring, men's work as caregivers can be seen as a problem"(48). Based on the feminist "ethics of care" work done in a variety of disciplines in the 1980's – Gilligan, Belenky et al, and others—and carried over into education rhetoric, teaching, particularly in the early grades, integrates, as King points out, "academic subjects with…close relationships…with students and other teachers"(48). This conflation of teacherly activities affects and is impacted by teachers' cultural groups—colleagues, parents, student groups and school administration (48).

On a separate, parallel level, this understanding of teaching has resulted in the "feminization" of teaching, which problematizes the position of men as teachers (50). Public perceptions of male primary teachers as "pedophiles, homosexuals, or principals (in training)" (47,52) doubly compromise the positions of gay men who work as teachers. If gay teachers do not (or cannot) hide their sexual orientation, and that orientation is perceived publicly as "oversexed," their professionality may always be interrogated. If they are closeted, gay teachers must constantly self-monitor in their work with children, compromising personal authenticity. Gay teachers are thus caught in cultural constructs. The resulting fragmentation, between public and personal presentation, between professional care and cultural stereotypes, between retaining teaching positions and retaining authenticity, exacts a high cost in energy, resources, and both personal and professional job satisfaction for gay and lesbian teachers (56). Effectiveness as teachers is also diminished because of the self-monitoring and psychological distancing which are used as coping strategies in dealing with students.

Lamb, Mary R. "Passing as Teacher: Constructing a Lesbian Feminist Pedagogy." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Chicago, 1998.

Lamb discusses Mary Elliott's "Coming Out in the Classroom: A Return to the Hard Place" (1996) and Susan Jarratt's "Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict" (1991), and argues that "coming out in the classroom is essential—for gay and lesbian civil rights, for human rights, for individual and social improvement." She examines the problems that may occur when teachers come out, and offers suggestions for a pedagogy that teaches students to interrogate issues of gender and sexuality.

Magee, D. B. "Contact and Comfort Zones: Gay Male Praxis in the Composition Classroom." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Chicago, 1998.

Magee draws on the study by Griffin, cited elsewhere in this bibliography, enumerating the "identity management strategies" gay and lesbian educators employ with regard to their sexual orientation. Magee argues that his "healthy identity as a gay male informs his performance in the contact zone of the classroom in ways that may be different from that of heterosexual teachers." He concludes, "Gay male teachers who are less closeted view their sexual orientation as having more positive influences upon their teaching practices." Such teachers are able to shift their energies from hiding their sexual orientation to their work in the classroom.

Rofes, Eric. "Transgression and the Situated Body: Gender, Sex, and the Gay Male Teacher." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Diego, 1998.

Rofes uses representations of gay male teachers in gay male discourses a way of examining the role of gay male teachers in education. The author employs his own classroom experience to interrogate the responsibilities gay male teachers have and contributions they can make to their students. Rofes discusses the way in which gay male teachers feel forced to limited choices in expressions of their sexuality and interrogates the place of alternative choices—how may these be affirmed (or not) in the college classroom?

Skelton, Tracey. "Issues of Sexuality in the Teaching Space." Journal of Geography in Higher Education 21:3 (1997): 424-431.

The author discusses the problematics of teaching about sexuality and of coming out as a homosexual teacher in the context of teaching a second-year social and cultural geography course.

Woods, Sherry E. and Karen M. Harbeck. "Living in Two Worlds: The Identity Management Strategies Used by Lesbian Physical Educators." Coming Out of the

Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers, and Curricula. Ed. Karen M. Harbeck. New York: Harrington Park Press/Haworth Press, 1992. 141-166.

Woods and Harbeck report the results of a phenomenological case study of twelve lesbian physical education teachers on their experiences of their identities as lesbians and as teachers in the schools. As the authors note, "All study participants held two assumptions: that they would lose their jobs if their lesbianism were revealed, and that female physical education teachers are negatively stereotyped as being lesbian" (141). Noting that teachers whose content areas do not follow traditional gender roles are most vulnerable to being fired if their sexual orientations were known, female physical education teachers may be most at risk, since their presence challenges assumptions about male dominance in sports, and also because they must supervise same sex students (143). In the context of strong societal myths of lesbians and gays as "recruiters" and "child molesters", the positionality of female, and especially, lesbian, physical education teachers makes them very vulnerable to attack.

The authors note that the teachers in the study adopted a wide variety of strategies to safeguard their jobs and their personal safety, including,

> concealment of their lesbian identities, passing as heterosexuals, self-distancing from students, teachers, and administration, and self-distancing from issues of homosexuality (149-150)

The psychic cost of these strategies for the teachers, Woods and Harbeck note, are very high:

> Clearly, the participants felt that the avoidance of potentially gay and lesbian students was a betrayal of these young people who were searching for help in defining who they were as human beings. By hiding their own sexual orientation, the participants felt they were failing to be positive role models and failing to provide accurate information about homosexuality. While the participants all felt quite positive about their lesbian lifestyle outside the school environment, they uniformly believed that bringing that lifestyle into their work situation would be hazardous to their career (155).

The teachers did take some risks, though not nearly as many as they used strategies to hide their identities as lesbians (155). These include some of the behaviors listed in Griffin, being "implicitly out," challenging students' derogatory remarks, and occasionally "overtly overlapping their personal and professional lives" (155).

Zimmerman, Bonnie. "The Challenge of Conflicting Communities: To Be Lesbian and Jewish and a Literary Critic." People of the Book: Thirty Scholars Reflect on Their Jewish Identity. Eds. Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky and Shelley Fisher Fishkin. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996. 203-216.

I wish to subvert, hopefully without too much damage to her meaning, and with profound for her work, Zimmerman's discussion of the connections between Judaism and homosexuality, because her words create a powerful metaphor for conflicts lesbian and gay educators experience every moment of their professional careers:

> Jews and gays/lesbians "live in every culture and class, reside in every country...The experience of prejudice and struggle for civil rights, the sustaining of a hidden subculture, the dilemma of "passing" or "coming out," the dual vision produced by living in two worlds.... Some Jewish lesbians (and gay men) seek to integrate parts of the self that are often at war: a Jewish tradition that is both theologically and culturally hostile to homosexuality and a gay/lesbian ethos that can minimize cultural difference (212).

Lesbian and gay educators also "live in two worlds", the heterosexist cultures of school and society, who often "sustain...a hidden subculture," their gay identities, and also, as Zimmerman claims for Jewish gays and lesbians, "yearn for a cohesive community in which to harmonize these conflicting influences" (212).

At the same time, Zimmerman interrogates essentialist ideas of community and assimilation, as I, too, perhaps should interrogate essentialist ideas about what might (or might not) work to create more integrated identities for gay and lesbian teachers. Zimmerman posits, realistically I think, that the willingness to live with contradiction may be a "source of energy and transformation...rather than failure" (213). So, too, as lesbian and gay teachers, we too may need to be willing to be live with the conflict of our "selves" as lesbians and gays with our "selves" as teachers, working at integration, but also being willing to "live with contradiction."

Between Gay Authenticity and Homophobia:
Coming Out and Closeting in Schools and Universities

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network. "What You Can Do...To Help End Homophobia in Your School." New York: GLST Network. ERIC ED410359.

This document places suggestions for lessening homophobia in school and classroom settings within the context that "gay and lesbian members of the school community need to know that their schools value equality and that they are protected against discrimination." With that sort of support, gay, lesbian and straight teachers can offer the following: "(1) guarantee equality; (2) create a safe environment; (3) provide role models; (4) provide support for students; (5) provide training for faculty and staff, (6) reassess the curriculum; (7) provide appropriate health care and education; (8) diversify library and media holdings; (9) broaden enlightenment programs; and (10) do not assume that students and other teachers are heterosexual." This list both presupposes a supportive administration, which many lesbian and gay teachers experience as non-existent, and also illustrates the needs present in our public schools.

Harbeck, Karen M. "Gay and Lesbian Educators: Past History/Future Prospects." Coming Out of the Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers, and Curricula. New York: Harrington Park Press, 1992. 121-140.

Harbeck, a lesbian educator, attorney, and social historian, using computer data retrieval, tracked litigation from the 1700's to the present involving homosexual teachers. She uses

these fifty cases and the legal opinions expressed to show "changing social and legal attitudes about homosexuality and teachers' rights," but makes the significant point that "these legal opinions...were devoid of any contemporaneous political action or political controversy that might have been the catalyst of the legal struggle" (122). She seeks, then, in this shorter summary of her doctoral thesis, Personal Freedoms/Public Constraints: An Analysis of the Controversy Over the Employment of Homosexuals as School Teachers, to provide a history of lesbians and gays and their/our legal rights as teachers.

Harbeck shows that understanding of the professional/personal lives of lesbian and gay teachers are little understood or present in scholarly education literature precisely because of the strategies these educators have had to adopt to retain employment and to protect themselves from litigation and physical danger:

> ...Since colonial times the most common scenario is one of a person living an exemplary life in fear of discovery. In that rare instance when his or her homosexual orientation became known, the teacher quietly resigned or quickly left town, since the potential consequences of challenging the system alone were extreme. At various times in history, homosexuality has been perceived as a sin, a mental disorder, and/or a criminal activity...Thus, remaining invisible and not challenging the status quo were reasonable responses in the face of personal danger and financial ruin (124).

Additionally, such strategies have worked to instill negative self-images among gay and lesbian teachers that further hinder justice in the workplace (124).

Harbeck juxtaposes parallels between increasing numbers of court cases against homosexual teachers beginning in the mid-1940's and through the McCarthyite 1950's and social attitudes towards homosexuality with an "increased concern for the procedural rights of criminals, and a growing sympathy towards persons accused of victimless crimes" (125). She marks this as the beginning of a "social conflict" between the courts and schools over judicial support for school persecution of the private lives of gay and lesbian educators. She details legislation and case law through the early 1970's to show that "the effects of the "sexual revolution" and the legal emphasis on personal freedom, privacy, and minority rights combined with the increasing political effectiveness of the lesbian and gay rights movement to alter the character of homosexual teacher case law" (126). She points out that conservative reaction came in three political campaigns of national significance: Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign in Florida (1977), California's "Proposition Six" Initiative (1978), and the Oklahoma State law (1978-85) that prohibited homosexual conduct, activity or advocacy by school employees (122). Harbeck feels that the Bryant campaign, in particular,

> Tapped the urge by local citizens to vote on the issues of changing social values. During the late 1960's and early 1970's, social change concerning abortion, contraceptives, civil rights, control over education, prayer in the schools, and the war in Vietnam, for examples, had all been largely determined by Federal judicial decisions and Legislative and Executive branch action. Voting in opposition to sexual preference protections was one of few opportunities for the average

American to express his or her concern over these breaks with social tradition (128).

While Harbeck's study ends in the late 1980's, it is evident that while Americans still are seeking to legislate heterosexism.. The recent refusal of many states and cities to add sexual orientation to the list of differences protected under Hate Crimes acts is clear evidence—as is the defeat of Human Rights ordinances in many cities (Toledo, OH is a notable exception to this in that city's recent adoption of a Human Rights Ordinance protecting the rights of gay and lesbian persons to employment and housing.)

Harbeck offers some useful advice to lesbian and gay educators, based on her construct of social and legal history:

> There remains...the real possibility of insidious incidents relating to limited advancement, ungranted tenure, mundane duty assignments, and undesirable teaching loads. Assessments of the costs and benefits of being "out" remains an individual task, although it seems clear that gay and lesbian educators have many more options than our invisible presences would lead us to believe (131).

She advises lesbian and gay teachers to educate, citing studies that indicate, "if a heterosexual individual knows a homosexual, then acceptance increases as stereotypical responses decrease" (134). She also argues that those educators who are "out" to school administrators increase "the climate of support and job security" for the lesbian and gay teachers coming after them (134).

Juul. Thomas P. "Community and Conformity: A National Survey Contrasting Rural, Suburban, and Urban Lesbian, Gay Male, and Bisexual Public School Teachers." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational research Association. San Francisco, 1995.

Among the findings of this study of 904 gay, lesbian, and bisexual public school teachers, Juul notes with regard to teachers' self-disclosure of their sexual orientation: "Gay suburban and rural teachers were significantly more stressed and less open than urban teachers about their sexual orientation...and were significantly less open, more fearful of exposure, less accepting of their identities, and different in their overall sense of identity than urban teachers." Additionally, rural teachers "indicated a higher rate of depersonalization from their students, a higher level of emotional exhaustion, and a lowered sense of personal accomplishment from teaching other than either suburban or urban teachers." These findings seem to indicate that urban teachers are most likely to be open about their sexual orientation.

Juul, Thomas P. "Joining Gay and Lesbian Teacher Organizations: A Study of Members and Non-Members." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New York, 1996.

Juul's study finds that lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers who belong to lesbian, gay, and bisexual teacher organization "reported significantly less stress at work related to their sexuality." Those were members were "more likely to be male, more confident of their civil rights, more likely to be involved in gay civil rights organizations, and less likely to

be married or parents" than those who were not members of such organizations. This finding indicates a correlation between activism and possibly a greater incidence of being out in the classroom. In addition, an interesting subtext is revealed for those who are not members—those with children, or still married and probably closeted—experience greater stress in their teaching contexts. On the other hand, Juul notes that "organization members had somewhat higher scores on measures of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which, combined with lower scores for sense of personal accomplishment, put them at high risk fir teacher burnout."

Khayatt, Madiha Didi. Lesbian Teachers: An Invisible Presence. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Khayatt examines the professional constraints lesbian teachers in the Ontario, Canada public school system experienced in the 1980's and the ways in which their choices not to disclose their sexual orientation in their schools affects them personally and professionally. According to Khayatt, there are

> at least two factors that influence the way a lesbian lives her life as a teacher. The first is the degree to which she is involved in feminist politics, how this helps her understand her choices, in what way her feminist vision informs her teaching, how she may be perceived within the context of her work community, and whether her feminist politics affect the course of her career. The second notable factor is the size of the city and/or board where the teacher is employed.

This discussion of the socially constituted subject position of the lesbian teacher is crucial in understanding the problematics of coming out in the classroom. Teachers face a variety of constraints and challenges, in different configurations every day, and choices to disclose sexual orientation both mirror and interrogate these constraints.

Kissen, Rita M. "Forbidden to Care: Gay and Lesbian Teachers." Caring in an Unjust World: Negotiating Borders and Barriers in Schools. Ed. Deborah Eaker-Rich and Jane Van Galen. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. 61-84.

Kissen argues, like King, that gay and lesbian teachers constantly measure, as do most gay and lesbian people, the relative safety or danger of coming out in each and every public and private encounter, and draws on teacher narratives to show the realities and dangers of coming out (61). On the one hand, gay and lesbian teachers acknowledge the importance of coming out to their own authenticity as individuals, as positive role models to gay and straight students of gay adults, and as supporters of gay students who struggle with the isolation and issues of their sexual orientation. The rhetoric of coming out, more and more powerfully presented as gay identity politics have become valorized in gay communities, media, and values, is a compelling force for gays and lesbians, even as, and because of homophobic attacks and hate crimes escalate in our society.

For gay teachers, the exigencies for coming out, from the desire born of caring for students, include the reality of the high rate of suicide among gay adolescents and the desire to be authentically ourselves, as an acknowledgement that only in this way can we be truly effective teachers. The risks include losing our jobs, if we refuse to guard our

pronouns about significant others—the recent case of Gerry Crane, a gay music teacher in Byron Center, Michigan who was fired because he honestly answered a student's question about the wedding ring he wore is a clear and tragic example--losing the collegiality of fellow teachers and thus, their support, and facing physical harm. Kissen, who acknowledges her position as a straight educator with a daughter who is a lesbian and a teacher, includes narratives in which teachers did succeed in coming out without, or at least, in spite of repercussions, and thus achieved personal and professional authenticity. This type of narrative is the valorized story of gay identity politics, and Kissen articulates her position that this is not always either possible or safe.

Kissen, Rita M. "Voices from the Glass Closet: Lesbian and Gay Teachers Talk about Their Lives." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Atlanta, 1993.

This case study examines the ways in which lesbian and gay educators are negatively affected by homophobia in the schools, as well as all teacher and all students. Kissen identifies themes arising from her interviews with lesbian and gay educators:

> (1) The need to develop strategies to avoid being fired and to nurture themselves in the face of tremendous pressure and stress, (2) almost all of the subjects reported physical and emotional symptoms that they attributed to the strains of their lives as gay teachers, (3) their regret at their inability to reach out to gay and lesbian students.

Kissen notes that these teachers "are beginning to see that risk taking, disclosure and standing up for others are essential to their own self worth."

Tierney, William G. "Introduction: Setting the Record "Straight" and "Counterfeiting: The Academic Closet." Academic Outlaws: Queer Theory and Cultural Studies in the Academy. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1997. ix-xxii and 93-116.

Tierney, in the introduction, deconstructs book dedications as a graphic illustration of the kind of hiding and invisibility gay and lesbians educators enact in the academy:

> The avoidance of a gay dedication may seem to sidestep a difficult circumstance in someone's life, but when it is framed within the scope of all other academic texts and academic life, what such avoidance accomplishes is to render not only the author but also all other gay and lesbian academics invisible (xi-xii).

If a book dedication must be written, Tierney argues, to hide one's sexual orientation, the academy is constraining the lives of lesbian and gay academics in ways it does not constrain those it perceives as heterosexual.

This discussion represents an important one for the idea of teacher positionality. As Tierney points out, "If the author had hidden his or her identity, the reader would have read the text and the text still would have been written by a gay or lesbian individual" (xiii). I would argue that this same premise is true for the gay or lesbian teacher in the classroom—regardless of whether the teacher is out, that class is still being taught by a gay or lesbian teacher, is still impacted by all that that teacher is.

In "Counterfeiting: The Academic Closet," Tierney provides some of the most recent research in this bibliography on the attitudes of lesbian and gay academics toward coming out. He contrasts definitions of homosexuality in academic culture in the 1940's and in the 1990's, and essentialist and social constructionist definitions of sexual orientation to show how

> What it means to be lesbian or gay is distinctly different now, and such a transformation suggests alternative ways of constructing sexual orientation in the academy (112).

Tierney argues from an epistemology of cultural politics that "being gay in academe does not only mean a same-sex attraction but also how I organize knowledge, how I think about my intellectual work, and how the academy rewards or sanctions books of this sort [about queer studies and gay academics]" (115). In this view, sexual identity may be "reconfigured over time and context but also occurs within the multiple and often conflicting contexts in which our lives are played out...[Gay] culture enables individuals and groups to come together, to make decisions about whether they should form groups, and to decide whether to be closeted or out" (115). An example of this is being played out at a state university where a colleague and friend teaches. Recently this colleague and several others who had come out to her as lesbian or gay began meeting in private homes for social occasions. As word spread among the mostly closeted gay and lesbian faculty, more and more began attending these parties. Eventually, a core group decided to "out" themselves in a private meeting with the university president, who had expressed interest and openness to gay and lesbian faculty, but "did not know who they were." At this meeting, the faculty present was able to speak about the climate of the university for gay and lesbian academics, and at further meetings, to broach the topic of domestic partner benefits. At the same time, many of these faculty remained closeted within their departments. On the whole, though, this group of gay and lesbian faculty was much more out than they had previously been. For Tierney, this kind of "reconfiguration" and "coming out" are ways of disrupting and transforming, for gay and lesbian educators, the culture of the academy.

Valentine, Gill. "Ode to a Geography Teacher: Sexuality and the Classroom." Journal of Geography in Higher Education 21:3 (1997): 417-424.

Valentine encourages "creating an atmosphere in the classroom that enables lesbian, gay and bisexual students and staff to "come out." He addresses important issues surrounding issues of sexuality in the classroom: student crushes, consenting staff-student relationships, and sexual harassment.

Yorke, Liz. "Constructing a Lesbian Poetic for Survival." Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. Ed. Sara Mills. New York: Longman, 1995. 47-75.

While Yorke's purpose here is to "examine how lesbian poets have negotiated the difficult gap between silence and speech in their attempts to construct within the symbolic, a language adequate to lesbian experience" and to critically discuss lesbian poetry, I include her essay because her framework, I contend, is also productive in a discussion of the identity of lesbian teachers. She notes that

> The lesbian writer has long been 'conscious of herself as an absence from discourse' and, in the face of censure, has traditionally adopted strategies of concealment involving a 'necessary obliquity' (Collecott 1990:94). Above all the struggle to articulate a poetic for survival has meant a struggle with fear, with internalised homophobia, with the otherness and difference of being lesbian (48).

The word "writer" in this description could as easily be substituted for "educator," as evidenced by other authors in this bibliography, on the effects of homophobia on lesbian and gay educators (Griffin, Harbeck, Kissen, King, and others). Further, Yorke writes that

> Lesbians have been excluded from the cultural symbolic order. They have found themselves situated at the margins of acceptability and have been virtually eradicated from many public discourses...Lesbian voices have literally been silenced, lesbian experience and identity have been erased... (47)

As Griffin and Harbeck point out in their documentation of the small number of studies done on lesbian educators, the voices and experience of these teachers has also been silenced, their voices have been historically excluded from professional and public discourses in education.

Yorke argues that the ways in which lesbian poets have worked to resist and challenge "conventional heterosexist poetic discourses...have disruptively entered language and history, and...develop[ed] a lesbian strategy of survival appropriate to the particular dangers they faced within their own location and historical situation" (73). I contend that lesbian teachers also work at these strategies of survival in an effort to integrate their authenticity as persons and as teachers.

Young, Claire and Diana Majury. "Lesbian Perspectives: Lesbian Absence in Chilly Climate Studies and Lesbian Experiences of the Chilly Climate." Breaking Anonymity: The Chilly Climate for Women Faculty. Eds. The Chilly Collective. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995. 345-358.

Young critiques the absence of lesbians and lesbian view points in the women's climate study conducted in the late 1980's at Western Ontario University, where she was then employed, while admitting her own complicity—she was awaiting tenure at the time and was not "out" at the university. Thus, she was not asked questions as a lesbian and did not answer questions in a way that would identify her as a lesbian. "Lesbians are perceived as an "invisible minority," says Young, "and many...are able to remain closeted. It is imperative as we struggle collectively as women on issue such as the chilly climate [for women in academia] that we speak out along with women of colour, and women with disabilities, as lesbians, and that means we have to be publicly identifiable" (352). Majury extends this rhetoric for lesbian faculty coming out in their universities in her recognition of the ways in which there are "individual differences, as well as systemic differences in how lesbians experience" the negative climate for women in the academy. Other factors she identifies as reasons for the variety of experience include levels of "outness" and personal appearance ("how much you look like a dyke") (353). She notes that

> Stereotyping, devaluation, exclusion, and re-victimization are very much a part of our experience as lesbians. Given the marginalization of lesbians and lesbian issues, these informal anti-lesbian practices and policies tend to be even further "below the level of awareness" and more easily dismissed as trivial and isolated incidents (353).

Majury sees a recognition of the university as a site of "power and institutional support" crucial to lesbian academics' sense of empowerment and responsibility for the climates in which they/we work. In addition, she argues that "levels of outness and assimilation" create tensions among lesbian academics that result in poor working climates for lesbian and other women academics.

The Importance of Coming Out Narratives
For Lesbian and Gay Teachers

Jennings, Kevin, Ed. One Teacher in 10: Gay and Lesbian Educators Tell Their Stories. Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 1994.

This collection of 35 brief coming-out stories of openly gay and lesbian teachers, and includes helpful appendices on "A Legal Overview of the Rights of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Teachers" (Mary Bonauto) and on "Gay and Lesbian Teacher Organizations in the United States." One of the real strengths of these coming-out narratives and the breadth of their diversity is their usefulness for lesbian and gay teachers who are contemplating coming out. Teachers can find narratives that approximate their own teaching sites, and perhaps judge the end results of their own coming out on their professional careers.

Kissen, Rita M. The Last Closet: The Real Lives of Lesbian and Gay Teachers. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 1996.

As a text, Kissen's book is an important document for lesbian and gay teachers. Because the "coming-out story" is valorized in the gay community, Kissen's use of this genre to tell the stories of lesbian and gay teachers works in several significant ways to support the coming out process. Kissen problematizes the view expressed in many quarters of the gay community that coming out will result in greater freedom (a recent example might by Chastity Bono's book, Family Outing) by showing how gay and lesbian teachers' lives are also complicated by issues of race and culture. For teachers of color or of marginalized cultures, coming out in the area of sexual orientation may be layered in terms of the cultural views of their own families and social groups, in the contexts of where they teach and where they live, and in the differences of class between home and school environments.

Narratives are also used to show how coming out experiences have affected the teachers, their colleagues, their administrators, and their students, and to problematic the binary of "positive or negative" as labels to these experiences. For example, can narratives in which teachers have come out to administrators and to colleagues and managed to retain their jobs, but not the collegiality of their peers be considered "positive"? Are narratives

that recount teachers' distress over having to remain closeted for their own physical safety while gal and lesbian students flounder for lack of role models **necessarily** stories of failure?

Kissen also uses these narratives to show how gay men and lesbians construct identities on multiple levels—as gay men and lesbians, as teachers, as colleagues, as members of cultural groups, of communities—and attempt to authenticate all these positions as classroom teachers/people. At the same time, these multiple subjectivities must be mediated through issues of personal safety, professional codes, job retention, career goals, and concern for gay and lesbian students.

Mintz, Beth and Rothblum, Esther, Eds. Lesbians in Academia: Degrees of Freedom. New York: Routledge, 1997.

This is a collection of 37 "coming-out" stories and analyses of lesbian experience in the university from lesbian academics. As a text, this book is important in its presentation of lesbians speaking from many academic disciplines, from many areas of the United States (and one from Australia). The writers examine the ways in which their sexual orientation intersect with issues of religion, race, class, conservative student and administrative cultures, power inequities, and family.

Rensenbrink. Carla Washburne. "What Difference Does It Make? The Story of a Lesbian Teacher." Harvard Educational Review 66:2 (1996): 257-270.

This coming out narrative by a fifth grade teacher posits that "her identity as a lesbian makes a positive difference in the classroom, making her class a safe place in which students can question culture and take a stand."

Spraggs. Gillian. "Coming Out in the National Union of Teachers." Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities in Education. Ed. Debbie Epstein. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1994. 179-196.

Part of a collection of essays about gay and lesbian students and educators in the U.K. (see Epstein entry for specific British governmental constraints on gay and lesbian educators), Spraggs' article argues for the importance of teachers coming out while recognition the risks such action may entail:

> It is not a teacher's business to emphasize continually her or his own opinions, let alone to press pupils to agree with them. But to assert that most teachers efface their own personalities when teaching is manifest nonsense, and to suggest that it is desirable that they should seek to do so is to disregard the many realities of the classroom situation (183)

This acknowledgement of the teacher's subject position as significant in the classroom is an important contribution to the motivations of lesbian and gay educators to come out. That Spraggs makes this contention in the light of her national teachers' union's policy of discouraging teachers from coming out illustrates the power the rhetoric of coming out in

gay identity politics has for the gay community, specifically, here for gay and lesbians educators.

The Realities of Lesbian and Gay Teachers' Lives

Epstein, Debbie. Ed. Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities in Education. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1994.

This collection of essays from the U.K. is divided into sections of "personal issues, issues of policy, curriculum and pedagogy, and historical and theoretical issues" (vii and viii) and includes "Lesbian and Gay Equality within a Whole School Policy" (Epstein), "Lesbian and Gay Issues in the Curriculum" (Patrick and Sanders), and "(In)visibility, Sexuality, Race and Masculinity in the School Context" (Mac An Ghaill). Epstein notes in her introduction that British law, specifically "Section 28 of the Local Government Act (1986) and more recent interpretations... emphasize the prohibition of the 'promotion' of homosexuality in teaching or resources" (ix). Epstein and Richard Johnson, who self-identify, respectively, as lesbian and straight, in "On the Straight and Narrow: The Heterosexual Presumption, Homophobias and Schools," offer useful definitions of homophobia and heterosexism and how these definitions present in the cultures of school and society.

Krieger, Susan. "Lesbian in Academe." The Family Silver: Essays on Relationships among Women. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. 155-170.

Krieger, a sociology professor, says so powerfully,

> Although I know discrimination exists in academic settings, and that I have experienced it, it feels to me as if it violates a code to turn around and point this out.... Such a fear of making things worse by calling attention to them probably accompanies any stigmatized minority status or sense of personal vulnerability. With homosexuality, and, in particular, lesbianism, the secrecy aspect of the status stands out more...for it is assumed that homosexuality can be hidden, that an individual can pass (as straight), and often should, thus disappearing as gay. One consequence of passing is that in becoming invisible to the outside world, one often becomes invisible to oneself." (155-156).

As a lesbian, Krieger has experienced censure from her university's administration, hostility and threats from students, reduction of her teaching load and thus, income, lack of recognition for her work in queer studies, harassment from male professors, and exclusion from tenure track positions, despite a strong scholarly record.

Lockman, Jeffrey J. "Be Fruitful, but Don't Multiply: Institutional Denial of Gay and Lesbian Families." The Family Track: Keeping Your Faculties While You Mentor, Nurture, Teach and Serve. Eds. Constance Coiner and Diana Hume George. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998. 211-214.

Lockman illustrates, through a narrative of his partner's and his efforts to get health coverage for their son at the university (Tulane) where he teaches, the conflicted views

academia takes towards its gay and lesbian faculty. On the one hand, Lockman claims, the university claims "tolerance of difference" when queer scholarship is published, to deny basic benefits to the families of queer scholars. The privileging of heterosexual families in university benefits increases the message of invisibility that the academy often sends to gay and lesbian parents who are also university professors, and devalues their place as contributing members of the university community. Lockman makes the important point that validation of all families in terms of these benefits also benefits the university with regard to employee satisfaction and loyalty.

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